The Original and Growth of PRINTING.

CONcerning the Time of bringing this Excellent ART into *England*, and by whoſe Expence and Procurement it was brought; Modern Writers of good Reputation do moſt Erroniouſly agree together. Mr. *Stow*, in his *Survey* of *London*, ſpeaking of the 37th year of Henry the ſixth his Reign, which was in 1459. ſaith, That the Noble Science of PRINTING was about this time found in *Germany* at *Mentz* by *John Guttenberg* a Knight, And that *William Caxton* of *London* Mercer, brought it into *England* about 1471. And firſt practiſed the ſame in the Abby of St. *Peter* at *Weſtminſter*, With whom Sir *Rich. Baker* in his Chronicle agrees throughout. And Mr. *Howell* in his *Hiſtorical Diſcourſe* of *London* and *Weſtminſter*, agrees with both the former in the Time, Perſon, and Place in general; but more particularly declares the place in *Weſtminſter* to be the Almory there; And that *Iſlip* Abbot of *Weſtminſter* ſet up the firſt Preſs of Book-Printing that ever was in *England*. Theſe three famous Hiſtorians having filled the World with the ſuppoſed truth of this Aſſertion, (Although poſſibly it might ariſe through the miſtake of the firſt Writer only, whoſe Memory I perfectly honour) makes it the harder Task upon me to undeceive the World again: Nor would I undertake this Work, but under a double notion; As I am a Friend to Truth, and ſo it is unfit to ſuffer one Man to be intituled to the worthy Achievements of another. And as a Friend to my ſelf, not to loſe one of my beſt Arguments of Intituling the King to this ART in his private Capacity.

Hiſtorians muſt of neceſſity take many things upon truſt, they cannot with their own but with the Eyes of others ſee what things were done before they themſelves were, *Bernardus non videt omnia*; 'Tis not then impoſſible they ſhould miſtake. I ſhall now make it appear they have done ſo from their Own, as well as from other Arguments: Mr. *Stows* Expreſſions are very dubious, and the matter expreſt very Improbable; He ſaith PRINTING was found in *Mentz*, which preſuppoſes it was practiſed ſome where elſe before, and loſt: And further, That 'twas found in the Reign of *Henry* the ſixth, in 1450. and not brought into *England* till Eleven years in the ſucceeding Reign of *Edward* the Fourth, being twelve years after, as if it had been loſt again. If this be true, there was as little Rarity as Expedition in obtaining it, the age of twelve years time having intervened, and ſo indeed it might be the Act of a Mercer rather than a more eminent Perſon: But when I conſider what great advantage the Kingdom in general receives by it, I could not but think a publick Perſon and a publick Purſe muſt needs be concerned in ſo publick a Good. The more I Conſidered of this, the more inquiſitive I was to find out the truth of it: At laſt, a Book came to my hands Printed at *Oxford*, in 1468. which was three years before any of the recited Authors would allow it to be in *England*; which gave me ſome reward for my Curioſity, and encouragement to proceed further: And in proſecution of this Diſcovery, the ſame moſt worthy Perſon who truſted me with the aforeſaid Book, did alſo preſent me with the Copy of a Record and Manuſcript in *Lambeth-Houſe*, heretofore in his Cuſtody, belonging to the See, (and not to any particular Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*,) the Subſtance whereof was this, (though I hope, for publick ſatisfaction, the Record it ſelf, in its due time, will appear.)

Thomas Bourchier, Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, moved the then King *Henry* the Sixth, to uſe all poſſible means for procuring a Printing-Mold (for ſo 'twas there called) to be brought into this Kingdom; the King (a good Man, and much given to Works of this Nature) readily hearkned to the Motion; and taking private Advice, how to effect His Deſign, concluded it could not be brought about without great Secrecy, and a conſiderable Sum of Money given to ſuch Perſon or Perſons, as would draw off ſome of the Work-men from *Harlem* in *Holland*, where *John Guttenberg* had newly invented it, and was himſelf perſonally at Work: 'Twas Reſolv'd, that leſs then one Thouſand Marks would not produce the deſir'd Effect: Towards which Sum, the ſaid Arch-Biſhop preſented the King with Three Hundred Marks. The Money being now prepared, the Management of the Deſign was committed to Mr. *Robert Turnour*, who then was of the Robes to the King, and a Perſon moſt in Favour with Him, of any of his Condition: Mr. *Turnour* took to his Aſſiſtance Mr. *Caxton*, a Citizen of good Abilities, who Trading much into *Holland*, might be a Creditable Pretence, as well for his going, as ſtay in the *Low-Countries*: Mr. *Turnour* was in Diſguiſe (his Beard and Hair ſhaven quite off) but Mr. *Caxton* appeared known and publick. They having received the ſaid Sum of One Thouſand Marks, went firſt to *Amſterdam*, then to *Leyden*, not daring to enter *Harlem* it ſelf; for the Town was very jealous, having impriſoned and apprehended divers Perſons, who came from other Parts for the ſame purpoſe: They ſtaid till they had ſpent the whole One Thouſand Marks in Gifts and Expences: So as the King was fain to ſend Five Hundred Marks more, Mr. *Turnour* having written to the King, that he had almoſt done his Work; a Bargain (as he ſaid) being ſtruck betwixt him and two *Hollanders*, for bringing off one of the Work-Men, who ſhould ſufficiently Diſcover and Teach this New Art: At laſt, with much adoe, they got off one of the Under-Workmen, whoſe Name was *Frederick Corſellis*, who late one Night ſtole from his Fellows in Diſguiſe, into a Veſſel prepared for that purpoſe; and ſo the Wind (favouring the Deſign) brought him ſafe to *London*.

'Twas not thought ſo prudent, to ſet him on Work at *London*, (but by the Arch-Biſhops means, who had been Vice-Chancellor, and afterwards Chancellor of the Univerſity of *Oxford*,) *Corſellis* was carryed with a Guard to *Oxford*; which Guard conſtantly watch'd, to prevent *Corſellis* from any poſſible Eſcape, till he had made good his promiſe in Teaching how to Print: So that at *Oxford* Printing was firſt ſet up in *England*, which was before there was any Printing-Preſs, or Printer, in *France*, *Spain*, *Italy*, or *Germany*, (except the City of *Mentz*) which claims Seniority, as to Printing, even of *Harlem* it ſelf, calling her City, *Urbem Moguntinam Artis Typographicæ Inventricem primam*, though 'tis known to be otherwiſe, that City gaining that Art by the Brother of one of the Workmen of *Harlem*, who had learnt it at Home of his Brother, and after ſet up for himſelf at *Mentz*.

This Preſs at *Oxford* was at leaſt ten years before there was any Printing in *Europe* (except at *Harlem*, and *Mentz*) where alſo it was but new born. This Preſs at *Oxford*, was afterwards found inconvenient, to be the ſole Printing-place of *England*, as being too far from *London*, and the Sea: Whereupon the King ſet up a Preſs at St. *Albans*, and another in the Abby of *Weſtminſter*, where they Printed ſeveral Books of Divinity and Phyſick, for the King, (for Reaſons beſt known to himſelf and Council) permitted then no Law-Books to be Printed; nor did any Printer Exerciſe that ART, but onely ſuch as were the Kings ſworn Servants; the King himſelf having the Price and Emolument for Printing Books.

Printing thus brought into *England*, was moſt Graciouſly Received by the King, and moſt Cordially Entertained by the Church, the Printers having the Honour to be ſworn the Kings Servants, and the Favour to Lodge in the very Boſom of the Church; as in *Weſtminſter*, St. *Albans*, *Oxford*, &c. By this means the ART grew ſo famous, that *Anno prim. Rich. 3. cap. 9.* when an Act of *Parliament* was made for Reſtraint of Aliens, from uſing any Handicraſts here, except as Servants to Natives, a ſpecial *Proviſo* was inſerted, that Strangers might bring in Printed or Written Books, to ſell at their pleaſure, and Exerciſe the ART of Printing here, notwithſtanding that Act: So that in the ſpace of 40 or 50 years, by the ſpecial Induſtry and Indulgence of *Edward* the Fourth, *Edward* the Fifth, *Richard* the Third, *Henry* the Seventh, and *Henry* the Eighth, the *Engliſh* prov'd ſo good Proficients in *Printing*, and grew ſo numerous, as to furniſh the Kingdom with Books; and ſo Skilful, as to *Print* them as well as any beyond the Seas, as appears by the Act of the 25 *Hen.* 8. *cap.* 15. which Abrogates the ſaid *Proviſo* for that Reaſon. And it was further Enacted in the ſaid Statute, That if any perſon bought Forreign books Bound, he ſhould pay 6*l.* 8*d. per* Book, *&c.*

But *Printing* became now ſo dangerous to the Commonwealth, That there were more Books Burnt in Ten years, then could be Printed in Twenty: So that it Concern'd the Prince altogether as much to Suppreſs the Abuſe, as it did before to Obtain the Uſe of *Printing*; And had there not been a Reſerve of Licenſing ſuch Books as ſhould be *Printed* ſtill remaining in the Crown, they might have publiſhed the wickedneſs of their own Imaginations with Authority. But Queen *Elizabeth* at her very firſt Entrance to the Crown, finding ſo great Diſorders in *Church* and *State*, by reaſon of the abuſe in *Printing*, Secures in the firſt place the *Law* and the *Goſpel*, of both which the Kings and Queens of *England* have Inherent Right as Heads of the Church, and Supream of the Law; and not onely in their publick, but private Capacity, as Proprietors; the Power and Signiory of this, under Favour, cannot be ſevered from the Crown: The Kings being the Truſtees of the People, who have formerly taken an Oath at their Coronation, *That they ſhall keep all the Lands, Honours, and Dignities, Rights, and Freedoms of the Crown of* England, *in all manner whole without any manner of miniſhment*; and the *Right of the Crown, hurt, decay'd, or loſt, to their Power ſhall call again into the Ancient Eſtate*. Which Oath, the ſaid Queen kept inviolably, and liv'd the more quietly for it all the time of her Reign, and died in Peace. True it is, they may, and do gratifie their Friends and Servants, in giving them the Emoluments and Profits that ariſe from *Printing*; but the Power they cannot alienate from the Crown, without loſing the moſt precious Stone out of their Diadem. To ſhew you one Example for all: The ſaid Queen, the firſt Year of her Reign, grants by Patent the Privilege of ſole *Printing* all Books, that touch or concern the Common-Laws of *England*, to *Cawſel* a Servant to her Majeſty, who kept it intire to his Death. After him, to one *Tottiell*, another Servant to Her Majeſty: After him, to one *Wright* and *Norton*; and after them, King *James* grants the ſame Privilege to *More*, one of His Majeſties Clerks of the Signet, which Grant continues to this Day: and as for the Bible, the Statute-Laws, the Book of Common-Prayer, Proclamations, as much as the Grammer, the Primmer, &c. are all granted by Kings and Queens, not onely to gratifie their Friends and Servants, but to preſerve the Regal Power and Authority of the Foot, and theſe Books from being Corrupted.

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Historians must of necessity take many things upon trust, they cannot with their own but with the Eyes of others see what things were done before they themselves were, *Bernardus non videt omnia*; 'Tis not then impossible they should mistake. I shall now make it appear they have done so from their Own, as well as from other Arguments: Mr. *Stows* Expressions are very dubious, and the matter expreſt very Improbable; He saith PRINTING was found in *Mentz*, which presupposes it was practised some where else before, and lost: And further, That 'twas found in the Reign of *Henry* the sixth, in 1450. and not brought into *England* till Eleven years in the succeeding Reign of *Edward* the Fourth, being twelve years after, as if it had been lost again. If this be true, there was as little Rarity as Expedition in obtaining it, the age of twelve years time having intervened, and so indeed it might be the Act of a Mercer rather than a more eminent Person: But when I consider what great advantage the Kingdom in general receives by it, I could not but think a publick Person and a publick Purse must needs be concerned in so publick a Good. The more I Considered of this, the more inquisitive I was to find out the truth of it: At last, a Book came to my hands Printed at *Oxford*, in 1468. which was three years before any of the recited Authors would allow it to be in *England*; which gave me some reward for my Curiosity, and encouragement to proceed further: And in prosecution of this Discovery, the same most worthy Person who trusted me with the aforesaid Book, did also present me with the Copy of a Record and Manuscript in *Lambeth-House*, heretofore in his Custody, belonging to the See, (and not to any particular Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*,) the Substance whereof was this, (though I hope, for publick satisfaction, the Record it self, in its due time, will appear.)

Thomas Bourchier, Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, moved the then King *Henry* the Sixth, to use all possible means for procuring a Printing-Mold (for so 'twas there called) to be brought into this Kingdom; the King (a good Man, and much given to Works of this Nature) readily hearkned to the Motion; and taking private Advice, how to effect His Design, concluded it could not be brought about without great Secrecy, and a considerable Sum of Money given to such Person or Persons, as would draw off some of the Work-men from *Harlem* in *Holland*, where *John Guttenberg* had newly invented it, and was himself personally at Work: 'Twas Resolv'd, that less then one Thousand Marks would not produce the desir'd Effect: Towards which Sum, the said Arch-Bishop presented the King with Three Hundred Marks. The Money being now prepared, the Management of the Design was committed to Mr. *Robert Turnour*, who then was of the Robes to the King, and a Person most in Favour with Him, of any of his Condition: Mr. *Turnour* took to his Assistance Mr. *Caxton*, a Citizen of good Abilities, who Trading much into *Holland*, might be a Creditable Pretence, as well for his going, as stay in the *Low-Countries*: Mr. *Turnour* was in Disguise (his Beard and Hair shaven quite off) but Mr. *Caxton* appeared known and publick. They having received the said Sum of One Thousand Marks, went first to *Amsterdam*, then to *Leyden*, not daring to enter *Harlem* it self; for the Town was very jealous, having imprisoned and apprehended divers Persons, who came from other Parts for the same purpose: They staid till they had spent the whole One Thousand Marks in Gifts and Expences: So as the King was fain to send Five Hundred Marks more, Mr. *Turnour* having written to the King, that he had almost done his Work; a Bargain (as he said) being struck betwixt him and two *Hollanders*, for bringing off one of the Work-Men, who should sufficiently Discover and Teach this New Art: At last, with much ado, they got off one of the Under-Workmen, whose Name was *Frederick Corsellis*, who late one Night stole from his Fellows in Disguise, into a Vessel prepared for that purpose; and so the Wind (favouring the Design) brought him safe to *London*.

'Twas not thought so prudent, to set him on Work at *London*, (but by the Arch-Bishops means, who had been Vice-Chancellor, and afterwards Chancellor of the University of *Oxford*,) *Corsellis* was carryed with a Guard to *Oxford*; which Guard constantly watch'd, to prevent *Corsellis* from any possible Escape, till he had made good his promise in Teaching how to Print: So that at *Oxford* Printing was first set up in *England*, which was before there was any Printing-Press, or Printer, in *France*, *Spain*, *Italy*, or *Germany*, (except the City of *Mentz*,) which claims Seniority, as to Printing, even of *Harlem* it self, calling her City, *Urbem Moguntinam Artis Typographicæ Inventricem primam*, though 'tis known to be otherwise, that City gaining that Art by the Brother of one of the Workmen of *Harlem*, who had learnt it at Home of his Brother, and after set up for himself at *Mentz*.

This Press at *Oxford* was at least ten years before there was any Printing in *Europe* (except at *Harlem*, and *Mentz*) where also it was but new born. This Press at *Oxford*, was afterwards found inconvenient, to be the sole Printing-place of *England*, as being too far from *London*, and the Sea: Whereupon the King set up a Press at St. *Albans*, and another in the Abby of *Westminster*, where they Printed several Books of Divinity and Physick, for the King, (for Reasons best known to himself and Council) permitted then no Law-Books to be Printed; nor did any Printer Exercise that ART, but onely such as were the Kings sworn Servants; the King himself having the Price and Emolument for Printing Books.

Printing thus brought into *England*, was most Graciously Received by the King, and most Cordially Entertained by the Church, the Printers having the Honour to be sworn the Kings Servants, and the Favour to Lodge in the very Bosom of the Church; as in *Westminster*, St. *Albans*, *Oxford*, &c. By this means the ART grew so famous, that *Anno prim. Rich. 3. cap. 9.* when an Act of *Parliament* was made for Restraint of Aliens, from using any Handicrafts here, except as Servants to Natives, a special *Proviso* was inserted, that Strangers might bring in Printed or Written Books, to sell at their pleasure, and Exercise the ART of Printing here, notwithstanding that Act: So that in the space of 40 or 50 years, by the special Industry and Indulgence of *Edward* the Fourth, *Edward* the Fifth, *Richard* the Third, *Henry* the Seventh, and *Henry* the Eighth, the *English* prov'd so good Proficients in *Printing*, and grew so numerous, as to furnish the Kingdom with Books; and so Skilful as to *Print* them as well as any beyond the Seas, as appears by the Act of the 25 *Hen.* 8. *cap.* 15. which Abrogates the said *Proviso* for that Reason. And it was further Enacted in the said Statute, That if any person bought Forreign books Bound, he should pay 6*s.* 8*d.* *per* Book, *&c.*

But *Printing* became now so dangerous to the Commonwealth, That there were more Books Burnt in Ten years, then could be Printed in Twenty: So that it Concern'd the Prince altogether as much to Suppress the Abuse, as it did before to Obtain the Use of *Printing*; And had there not been a Reserve of Licensing such Books as should be *Printed* still remaining in the Crown, they might have published the wickedness of their own Imaginations with Authority. But Queen *Elizabeth* at her very first Entrance to the Crown, finding so great Disorders in *Church* and *State*, by reason of the abuse in *Printing*, Secures in the first place the *Law* and the *Gospel*, of both which the Kings and Queens of *England* have Inherent Right as Heads of the Church, and Supream of the Law; and not onely in their publick, but private Capacity, as Proprietors; the Power and Signiory of this, under Favour, cannot be severed from the Crown: The Kings being the Trustees of the People, who have formerly taken an Oath at their Coronation, *That they shall keep all the Lands, Honours, and Dignities, Rights, and Freedoms of the Crown of* England, *in all manner whole without any manner of minishment; and the Right of the Crown, hurt, decay'd, or lost, to their Power shall call again into the Ancient Estate.* Which Oath, the said Queen kept inviolably, and liv'd the more quietly for it all the time of her Reign, and died in Peace. True it is, they may, and do gratifie their Friends and Servants, in giving them the Emoluments and Profits that arise from *Printing*; but the Power they cannot alienate from the Crown, without losing the most precious Stone out of their Diadem. To shew you one Example for all: The said Queen, the first Year of her Reign, granted by Patent the Privilege of sole *Printing* all Books, that touch or concern the Common Laws of *England*, to *Tottel* a Servant to her Majesty, who kept it intire to his Death: After him, to one *Yetsweirt*, another Servant to Her Majesty: After him, to one *Meredith* and *Norton*; and after them, King *James* grants the same Privilege to *More*, one of His Majesties Clerks of the Signet; which Grant continues to this Day; and so for the Bible, the Statute Laws, the Book of Common Prayer, Proclamations, as much as the Grammer, the Primmer, &c. are all granted by Kings and Queens, not onely to gratifie their Friends and Servants, but to preserve the Regal Power and Authority of Foot, and these Books from being Corrupted.